

Temne Complementation*

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1. Introduction

Temne is a West Atlantic language spoken mainly in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone. It belongs to the southern West Atlantic sub-group, the group Dalby (1965) classifies as 'Mel'.¹

2. The simple sentence

The simple sentence in Temne is as follows:

- | | | | |
|-----|----|-------|-------------|
| (1) | a. | idira | 'I sleep' |
| | b. | odira | 'He sleeps' |

There are no tenses in Temne. Tense is indicated by adverbials:

- | | | | |
|-----|----|-----------------|------------------------|
| (2) | a. | idira | 'I sleep' |
| | b. | idira dɪs | 'I slept yesterday' |
| | c. | odira | 'He sleeps' |
| | d. | odira dɪs | 'He slept yesterday' |
| | e. | Musaŋ odira | 'Musa sleeps' |
| | f. | Musaŋ odira dɪs | 'Musa slept yesterday' |

There is a pronominal copy of the subject on the verb even when there is a full NP subject.

The order of elements in Temne is

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|-------|-----------------|---------------|
| (3) | Subject | Verb | Indirect Object | Direct Object |
| | Murkeŋ | ɔtaka | Abɔŋ | Asar |
| | 'Murkeh gives Abu the stone' | | | |

Aspect in Temne can be marked either lexically or by tone shift. For lexical marking the following verbs are used:
po - completive:

- | | | | |
|-----|----|----------|---------------|
| (4) | a. | ipo der | 'I have come' |
| | b. | ipo kɔnɛ | 'I have gone' |

bɔk - duration

- | | | |
|-----|----------|----------------|
| (5) | ibɔk der | 'I was coming' |
|-----|----------|----------------|

and tə - futurity

- (6) itə kɔnɛ 'I will go'

In addition, tə is also used to describe actions that are taking place but which will also continue in the future.

- (7) ɔtə dira 'He is sleeping'

means that he is sleeping now and will continue to sleep if no one interrupts him.

In all these sentences a tone shift can be used to convey the same meaning, even without the aspect markers. Thus the sentences in (8) are equivalent to each other:

- (8) a. ʒdɛr = ɔpo der 'he has come'
b. ʒkɔnɛ = ɔtə kɔnɛ 'he will go'

Modality in simple sentences is marked with tək 'should, must' as in:

- (9) a. ɔyi tək der 'he should come'
b. ɔba tək der 'he must come'

which is, of course, a case of clefting but which I will not deal with in this paper.

3. Complementation

In the simplest embedding, where one has like subjects, Equi-NP-Deletion occurs as in the following:

- (10) a. iyema kɔnɛ 'I want to go'
b. ipo kɔnɛ 'I have gone'

When Equi-NP-Deletion has occurred, no overt complementizer is possible and therefore the sentences shown in (11) and (12) are ungrammatical:

- (11) a. *iyema kɪyi kɔnɛ
b. *iyema kaŋka kɔnɛ
c. *iyema kama kɔnɛ
d. *iyema kɪyi kaŋka kama kɔnɛ
(12) a. *ipa kɪyi kɔnɛ
b. *ipa kaŋka kɔnɛ
c. *ipa kama kɔnɛ
d. *ipa kɪyi kaŋka kama kɔnɛ etc.

In the case of unlike subjects or like subjects with verbs of saying, overt complementizers are required:

- (13) a. ipa kɪyi ikɔnɛ 'I said that I went'
b. ikanɛmu kɪyi ɔkɔnɛ 'I told you that he went'

Verbs of saying are simply reportative, that is, they are neutral to the truth value of the embedded sentence.

With most verbs, the equivalent of English 'that' is any one of three complementizers: kɛyi, kaŋka and kama, which, under certain conditions, can co-occur:

- (14)
- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. | ipa kɛyi ɔkɔnɛ | 'I said that he went' |
| b. | ipa kaŋka ɔkɔnɛ | 'I told him to go' |
| c. | ipa kama ɔkɔnɛ | 'I asked him to go' |
| d. | ipa kɛyi kaŋka ɔkɔnɛ | 'I ordered him to go' |
| e. | ipa kɛyi kama ɔkɔnɛ | 'I requested that he go' |
| f. | ipa kaŋka kama ɔkɔnɛ | 'I told him to go' |
| g. | ipa kaŋka kɛyi kama
ɔkɔnɛ | 'I ordered him to go' |
| h. | ipa kɛyi kaŋka
kama ɔkɔnɛ | 'I asked him to go' |
| i. | *ipa kama kɛyi ɔkɔnɛ | |
| j. | *ipa kama kaŋka ɔkɔnɛ | |

In (14g) we observe that kaŋka precedes kɛyi to yield a grammatical sentence but with (14i) and (14j) we get ungrammatical sentences. That is to say that kama when used with the others cannot precede any of the other complementizers.

Since in (14a)-(14h) the verb does not change but the complementizers and meanings do, then the difference in meaning must reside in the complementizers.

3.1. Selection of complementizer. In the first place, kɛyi, if followed by a high tone, is neutral. However, if followed by low tone when used with certain verbs, it is equivalent to kaŋka as in

- (15)
- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------------|
| a. | ipa kɛyi ɔkɔnɛ | 'I said that he went' |
| b. | ipa kɛyi ɔkɔnɛ | 'I told him to go' |
| c. | ipa kaŋka ɔkɔnɛ | 'I told him to go' |

Tone after kaŋka and kama never changes, which again indicates that meaning differences lie in the meanings of the complementizers.

Let us then examine the meanings conveyed by these complementizers both individually and in combination.

3.2. The semantics of the complementizers. We begin with kɛyi. Kɛyi is used when the speaker is simply reporting. However, a sentence such as (16a) may be realized with two different tonal patterns--(16b) and (16c):

- (16)
- | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------------|
| a. | ipa kɛyi ɔfumpɛ | 'I said that he fell' |
| b. | ipa kɛyi ɔfumpɛ | |
| c. | ipa kɛyi ɔfumpɛ | |

In (16b) we have a high tone following the complementizer which indicates neutrality on the part of the speaker with respect to the truth value of the embedded sentence. In (16c) with low tone

In (19a) and (19b) kaŋka is the proper complementizer if the act of ordering someone is pragmatically appropriate; that is, if the person speaking is in a position to control the actions of the person addressed.

Kama (the other complementizer) would then be used in (19c), (19d) and (19e) where the action is completely left to the discretion of the person addressed.

The use of kama with requests is equivalent to English 'please' or 'if it may please you.' In cases like (19d) and (19e) where requests are not involved, the opposition between kaŋka and kama disappears, in general in the direction of kama.² Thus, what distinguishes kama from kaŋka or even kɛyi is that the subject of the higher sentence not only controls the situation but also determines the result. The relationship between the subject of the higher clause and that of the lower clause is pragmatically more intimate with the use of kama than it is with any of the other complementizers.

This is the main reason why kama is the most frequently used complementizer in Temne; its use carries with it the notion of humbleness, friendship, and open-mindedness to others. It is also for this reason that in a structure like (20) we get kama after the two other complementizers so that the order can be made a polite one.

(20) iyema kɛyi kaŋka kama ŋkone 'I want you to go'

What I have said so far is true not only of pa 'to say' but is also true of all the other verbs of saying such as:

(21)	fɔf	'speak'
	kanɛ	'tell'
	lom	'report'
	tɛlma	'talk'
	tam	'narrate'

Sentences illustrating these uses are:

(22)	a.	ifɔf kaŋka kama ɔtɛl	'I speak so that he may listen'
	b.	ikanɛ kɔ kɛyi ɔdɛr	'I told him that he has come'
	c.	iloma kɔ kɛyi ŋdira	'I reported to him that you slept.'
	d.	iɛlmanɛ yɛ kɔ	'I don't talk to him.'

Since kɛyi is neutral with respect to truth value, it is almost predictable that it is the only form used with verbs of mental activity as the following examples show:

(23)	a.	inane kɛyi asar ɲaŋ	'I think it is a stone.'
	b.	*inane {kaŋka kama} asar ɲaŋ	
	c.	ilane kɛyi ɔtɛ der	'I believe that he will come'
	d.	*ilane {kaŋka kama} ɔtɛ der	

- (23) e. iyema kiyi n̄pa kiyi ntamtam̄nye kiyi ye ipa
'I want you to say that you don't remember my
saying so' (that that was what I said)
f. *iyema kiyi n̄pa kiyi ntamtam̄nye {kaŋka} ye ipa.
kama
g. p̄balan̄ m̄ kiyi ʃkɔn̄
'It seems as if he has gone'
h. *p̄balan̄ m̄ {kaŋka} ɔkɔn̄
kama

It is interesting to note that the verb balan̄ m̄ 'seem as if' has a structure with kiyi, as in (24a) which can also occur as (24b).

- (24) a. p̄balan̄ m̄ kiyi Fodeŋ ɔpo der
'It seems as if Foday has come.'
b. Fodeŋ p̄balan̄ m̄ kiyi ɔpo der
'It seems as if Foday has come.'

This does not represent a case of raising but rather of fronting of the subject NP of the lower sentence for purposes of focus. We can easily see that this is so because balan̄ m̄ retains its abstract subject prefix p̄.

If balan̄ m̄ is used with the normal person prefix in a sentence such as (25) its meaning is then 'to resemble.'

- (25) Fodeŋ ɔbalan̄ m̄ wir. 'Foday looks like a goat.'

When it comes to verbs of desiring, it depends on how strongly the speaker wants the outcome of the embedded sentence, as can be seen in:

- (26) a. iyema kiyi ɔder 'I want him to come.'
b. iyema kaŋka ɔder 'I (strongly) desire that
he come.'
c. iyema kama ɔder 'I am in favor of his coming.'
d. iyema kaŋka ɔder, aŋ 'I am dying for him to come,
fela ɔŋ aŋ po mi bak I miss him.'
e. iyema kiyi ɔder k̄ɛɛ bep̄i ɔgb̄eli ye ye p̄baye apa
'I want him to come but if he can't it doesn't
matter'.
f. iyema kaŋka kama ɔder hali it̄eye ate yon̄ ye
'I strongly urge you to come no matter what
happens.'

Only kiyi can occur with the sentence 'I would like him to come but I don't really care' as shown by the following:

- (27) a. iyema kiyi ɔder k̄ɛɛ p̄baye apa.
b. *iyema {kaŋka} ɔder k̄ɛɛ p̄baye apa.
kama

Also predictable is the fact that verbs of urging and persuading cannot occur with kiyi since they themselves already show the interest of the speaker in the outcome of the embedded sentence.

- (28) a. *igbɛlɛŋ kɔ kɪyi ɔ yokanɛ
 'I urged him to get up.'
 b. *inɛmtɛnɛ kɔ toto kɪyi ɔto apla
 'I begged him repeatedly to pound the rice.'
 c. *ifɔfanɛ kɔ toto kɪyi ɔɔr
 'I persuaded him to come down.'

In contradistinction to what Rosenbaum (1967) proposed for English and Robin Lakoff (1968) for Latin, at least in Temne the selection of complementizers is not simply arbitrary but is instead determined by a combination of the semantics of the higher verb and the pragmatics of the situation.

The complementizers which the verbs take can be summarized as:

- (29) Verbs of saying
- | | | | |
|------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| pa | 'say' | [+kɪyi] | reportative |
| fɔf | 'speak' | | |
| kanɛ | 'tell' | [+kɪyi] | |
| lɔm | 'report' | [+kaŋka] | desiderative |
| tam | 'narrate' | [+kama] | |
| | etc. | | |
- Verbs of mental activity
- | | | | |
|-----------|------------|----------|-------------|
| lanɛ | 'believe' | [+kɪyi] | reportative |
| nanɛ | 'think' | | |
| balanɛ mɔ | 'seem' | [*kaŋka] | |
| tamtanɛ | 'remember' | [*kama] | |
| | etc. | | |
- Verbs of desire
- | | | | |
|------|--------|----------|--------------|
| yema | 'want' | [+kɪyi] | neutral |
| | etc. | | |
| | | [+kaŋka] | desiderative |
| | | [+kama] | |
- Verbs of persuading
- | | | | |
|--------|---------------------|----------|--------------|
| yifanɛ | 'ask of
someone' | [*kɪyi] | |
| gbɛlɛŋ | 'urge' | [+kaŋka] | desiderative |
| | etc. | [+kama] | |

Footnotes

*I wish to thank Amy Myers, Beatrice L. Hall, and R. M. R. Hall for their comments on previous versions of this paper. I would also like to express my gratitude to Robert S. Picciotto, Dean of Foreign Students at Queens College, for the encouragement which he has given me and the confidence which he has shown in me.

¹The data in this paper is based on the dialect of Temne spoken in Kassirie where I was born and raised. Kassirie is one of the major trading towns along the Kolenten River in Kambia District of Sierra Leone.

I am a Soso but I grew up in Kassirie, a predominantly Tenme-speaking town and therefore I am bilingual in Soso and Temne.

There is another major dialect of Temne which has some differences from my own. It is spoken mainly in the Tonkolili District of Sierra Leone and is referred to as Konike. However, I have checked my data with speakers of this dialect as well as with other speakers of my own dialect in New York and we all agreed that this data accounts for all of our dialects.

²Notice that in English, in exactly these sorts of sentences, the distinction between 'ask' and 'tell', is also neutralized as can be seen in (i) and (ii).

- (i) 'The spider told the child not to cry and he didn't.'
- (ii) 'The spider asked the child not to cry and he didn't.'

References

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